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SUBJECT: OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO OSCE HEAD OF
CENTER AMBASSADOR PRYAKHIN

11. (U) Post is authorized to present the following statement
at the May 29, 2008 Permanent Council meeting in Vienna.

Begin text:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Ambassador Pryakhin, welcome back to the Permanent Council
and thank you for your comprehensive report on the OSCE,s
activities in Tajikistan.

The United States is pleased to see an increase in dialogue
between the Center and the Government * including through
the second annual task force meeting * which has increased
the transparency of the OSCE,s work and the efficiency of
the Center. We take note that this has resulted in more
streamlined activities that better reflect the needs and
priorities of Tajikistan.

In keeping with this positive spirit of cooperation and
collaboration, we hope that current discussions between the
Government of Tajikistan and the Chairmanship result in a
robust mandate that meets Tajikistan,s needs in all three
dimensions.

The United States supports fully the Center,s work to assist
the Government in its political, economic, and social
development. While the Center,s many programs all help
contribute to the overall security in the country, we would
like to highlight a few that are notable for their successes
and innovative approaches.

The launch of four transborder trade promotion centers on
Tajikistan,s borders with Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan has
assisted Tajikistan improve trade, transit and communication
with its neighbors and is a particularly notable example of
the OSCE,s contribution to economic capacity building in the
region. We would also like to highlight and commend the
Center for its Small Arms and Light Weapons program, as well
as its Mine Action Program, which have increased the safety
and security of Tajikistan,s residents.

As you noted in your report, Ambassador Pryakhin, there
remain significant needs in Tajikistan where the OSCE could
provide additional assistance, including support to improve
Tajikistan,s economic capacity and to help fight corruption.
We are pleased that the Government of Tajikistan is calling
for an increased focus in this field and we hope that
participating States second staff to fill these new
positions.

The OSCE also has a larger role to play in assisting the
Government increase the professionalization of the police
forces, improve freedom of expression for members of the
media, respect for religious freedom, and support for civil
society development, including helping the Government fulfill
its OSCE commitments on NGO participation. We were
disappointed that the Government of Tajikistan refused to
register the National Democratic Institute this year and
recall the decision not to register Freedom House. We are

also concerned about efforts to pass a new religion law with problematic provisions, the banning of three minority religious communities, and Government plans to tear down the only Synagogue in Dushanbe to make additional room for the President,s palace grounds.

Mr. Chairman, the United States sees Tajikistan as a contributor to regional stability and an important partner in OSCE work with Afghanistan. We are pleased that since Ambassador Pryakhin,s last visit to the Permanent Council, Tajikistan and the OSCE have embarked on three extrabudgetary projects intended to tighten Tajikistan's borders. To play a leadership role many envision in regional border and customs management training, it is expected that Tajikistan will demonstrate a greater willingness to serve as a host for joint border management training with Afghan officials.

Thank you again, Ambassador Pryakhin. We look forward to seeing you again soon.
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